Influences of Work-Life Support of Officers' Organizational Commitment and Negative Work-Family Spillover

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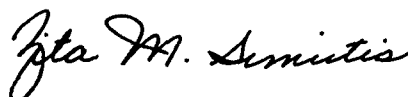for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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14. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*:
When Soldiers leave military service, the loss decreases the personnel available for operational missions. Consequently, a continued concern of the Army is to understand processes leading to Soldier retention and attrition. Given the large body of research showing that employees' organizational commitment is derived from their perceptions of the extent to which the employer is committed to and supportive of them, assistance with balancing the demands of work and family life is a promising intervention for improving Soldier experiences and increasing retention in the Army. This research examined the continuance of junior Army officers as it relates to benefit use, social support perceptions, and control over work-family issues. Hypotheses were based on principles of social support and the need for personal control. Results provided partial support for the process by which benefits are construed as support, which increases affective commitment, and the process by which benefits increase personal control, which decreases negative work-family spillover. Interestingly, benefit use was positively related to increased control over the work-family interface *and* increased resource dependence, which is characterized by dependence on others for their support and may be construed as surrendering some degree of control. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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Work-life support; officers; work-family spillover; organizational commitment; affective commitment; continuance commitment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

When Soldiers leave military service, the loss decreases the personnel available for operational missions. Consequently, a continued concern of the Army is to understand processes leading to Soldier retention and attrition. The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) is engaged in a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention." This research focuses on the continuance of junior officers and first-term enlisted Soldiers. Of particular interest are the determinants of continuance that are open to control by the organization of assignment. Among these is support of work-family issues. A large body of research shows that employees' organizational commitment derives from their perceptions of the extent to which the employer is committed to and supportive of them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Whitener, 2001). Given this, assistance with balancing the demands of work and family life is a promising intervention for improving Soldier experiences and increasing retention in the Army.

Procedure:

This research examined the continuance of junior Army officers as it relates to benefit use, social support perceptions, and control over work-family issues. Hypotheses were based on principles of social support and the need for personal control. Questionnaires assessing benefits, support, organizational commitment, control, and work-family conflict were completed by 254 U.S. Army captains.

Findings:

Results showed that having benefits is related to Soldiers' perceptions that the organization supports them, which translates to increased affective commitment to the organization. When there are fewer benefits, Soldiers tend to perceive lower levels of support, and affective commitment is lower. Results also show that using benefits increases personal control and decreases the degree to which work life "spills over" into family life. Use of benefits increases resource dependence, which is characterized by dependence on others for their support and possibly by a perception of surrender of some degree of control. Resource dependence did not increase continuance commitment, but it might become a concern if the organization were somehow unable to continue providing a benefit on which organizational members depend. Finally, results indicated that perceiving that the organization cares a lot about individuals is associated with higher affective commitment than perceiving that the organization cares very little. Future research could extend these findings by exploring other conceptualizations of Army support, as well as other means to increase control over work-family issues.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

The results reported here should enable the Army to better understand the specific benefits and supports that will lead to increased perceptions of organizational support and increased levels of individual control. Both outcomes are expected to increase commitment to the Army and help alleviate individuals' work-family conflict, thereby enhancing Soldiers' propensities to remain in the Army.

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) is engaged in a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" that is focused on understanding the continuance of junior officers and first-term enlisted Soldiers. When Soldiers leave military service, the loss decreases the personnel available for operational missions. Consequently, a continued concern of the Army is to understand processes leading to Soldier retention and attrition. A particular topic receiving research attention is the determinants of continuance that are open to control by the organization. Among these is support of work-family issues. Given the large body of research showing that employees' organizational commitment is derived from their perceptions of the extent to which the employer is committed to and supportive of them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Whitener, 2001), assistance with balancing the demands of work and family life is a promising intervention for improving Soldier experiences and increasing retention in the Army.

There is research evidence that perceptions of policies and contextual factors contribute uniquely to the prediction of organizational commitment (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). The provision of resources to organizational members is intended to increase their ability to negotiate various life demands. That is, the availability of work-life or, more specifically, "family-supportive" benefits increases one's choices for addressing conflicts that arise between work and nonwork responsibilities. Organizations need to understand the implications of instituting "family-friendly" policies. That includes describing the potential implications for attracting and maintaining a satisfied, productive, and healthy workforce.

Drawing on the propositions of resource dependence and social support theories, the current effort examines the effects of providing work-life benefits on individual work attitudes and well-being.[1] According to resource dependence (RD) theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) organizations must depend on resources obtained from the external environment. That is, organizations obtain inputs, such as raw materials and human resources, from the external environment. An organization's dependence varies as a function of the scarcity of these resources or the likelihood that they may be obtained from alternative suppliers. An analogy may be drawn for the individual. Individuals, like organizations, do not function as discrete entities. They depend on resources, such as material resources, information, and social support (Jun & Armstrong, 1997), obtained from the external environment. An external entity providing many resources to individuals is the work organization. Thus, the theory suggests that organizational members are constrained by their dependence on organizational resources. This dependence may result in feeling "trapped" in that leaving the organization incurs the loss of valued benefits and that alternatives are limited.

However, according to theories describing social support (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000) and organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa,

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[1] This research partly comprises the doctoral dissertation of the first author, "Employees and Work-Life Resources: Influences on Attraction, Spillover, and Commitment."

1986), assistance from others can decrease stress and improve favorable work attitudes. This suggests that work-life benefits, a form of instrumental support, should contribute to positive outcomes such as increased affective commitment to the organization. Two measures of support, perceived organizational support and family-supportive organization perceptions, are examined in this research. Affective commitment, which reflects one's emotional attachment to and identification with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997), is related to a number of positive organizational outcomes including satisfaction, job performance, and extrarole behaviors (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

Given the contrasting predictions of these theories, it is expected that benefits yield positive organizational outcomes via increased affective commitment and negative outcomes via increased continuance commitment (CC; Figure 1). Continuance commitment, which represents a sense of being "trapped" or having limited alternatives, can lead to negative outcomes such as decreased job performance and increased work absence (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Because benefits can be costly for organizations to offer, it is important to examine the conditions under which benefits result in favorable outcomes. Specifically, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) observed that until studies measure satisfaction, conflict, and policies together, the impact of work-life benefits remains an open question. In fact, strong evidence linking benefits, individual outcomes, and business operations is conspicuously absent from the work-family literature (Arthur, 2003; Bennett, Cook, & Pelletier, 2003). Unfortunately, it is precisely this evidence that is needed by organizational leaders to make informed policy decisions.

In summary, the purpose of this research was to evaluate the potential outcomes of family-supportive benefits for assisting current organizational members. Given the cost of family-supportive benefits and popular support for enacting them, this is an area that requires empirical research. Particularly when wages and other conditions are limited by external constraints, it can be efficacious to offer attractive benefits and organizational resources such as family support. This research tests a model of how benefits influence negative work-family spillover and organizational commitment of employees through social support and personal control perceptions. This research is intended to enhance our understanding of the stages of the employee-organization relationship that are likely affected by supportive organizational policies.

Why Focus on Family-Supportive Benefits?

Given emerging evidence that family-supportive benefits decrease work-family conflict (Allen, 2001; Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2002; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999) and the relation between individual well-being and organizational operations (Bennett, Cook, & Pelletier, 2003), work-life appears to be a logical focus for organizations' efforts at increasing continuance. However, additional research is needed as some studies have found a nonsignificant or unfavorable effect for benefits (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005; Judge & Colquitt, 2004). The importance of negotiating work and nonwork demands is salient to employees who have or expect to have notable personal responsibilities over the life course (Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998). In fact, work-life policy has surpassed salary in the top ten reasons employees stay with or go to work for another company (Allerton, 2000). Thus, the

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potential impact of work-life policies is extensive. Theory-driven research should offer evidence concerning the conditions under which interventions are likely to work.

Goff et al. (1990) found that although use of an on-site child care center did not decrease work/family conflict, having family-supportive supervisors was related to reduced absenteeism via decreased work/family conflict. The findings of this and similar studies (e.g., Kossek & Nichol, 1992) suggest that more abstract organizational characteristics, such as supportiveness of organizational or supervisory culture, may have profound implications for employee attitudes and behavior regarding attraction and retention. One factor likely to impact supportiveness perceptions is the knowledge that supportive benefits are available.

Perceptions of organizational support can increase employees' commitment to and performance in an organization (Allen, 2001; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Moideenkutty, Blau, & Kumar, 2001; Orpen, 1994; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Family-supportive policies are one way in which organizations may demonstrate their consideration of employee well-being, thereby increasing perceived organizational support.

In a study of randomly selected American workers, Grover & Crooker (1995) found that people are more attached to organizations that offer family-supportive policies, regardless of the extent to which they might personally benefit from the policies. Similarly, Goff et al. (1990) found that family-supportive supervision and satisfaction with child care were related to decreased work/family conflict, which was associated with lower levels of absenteeism. These and other similar studies suggest that support in various forms can improve both individual well-being and functioning on the job.

Balancing Work and Nonwork Life

Roles describe specific forms of behavior associated with given positions. Role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one makes compliance with the other more difficult (Katz & Kahn, 1966). According to role theory, the conflicting demands of multiple life roles make it difficult to perform each role successfully (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Although role theory is often applied to describe multiple work-related roles, it also serves as a framework for exploring conflict between work and nonwork roles (Allen, 2001). This research extends our knowledge of work-family spillover by exploring how benefits may influence organizational commitment and negative spillover (i.e., conflict) between work and family through social support and personal control perceptions of organizational members.
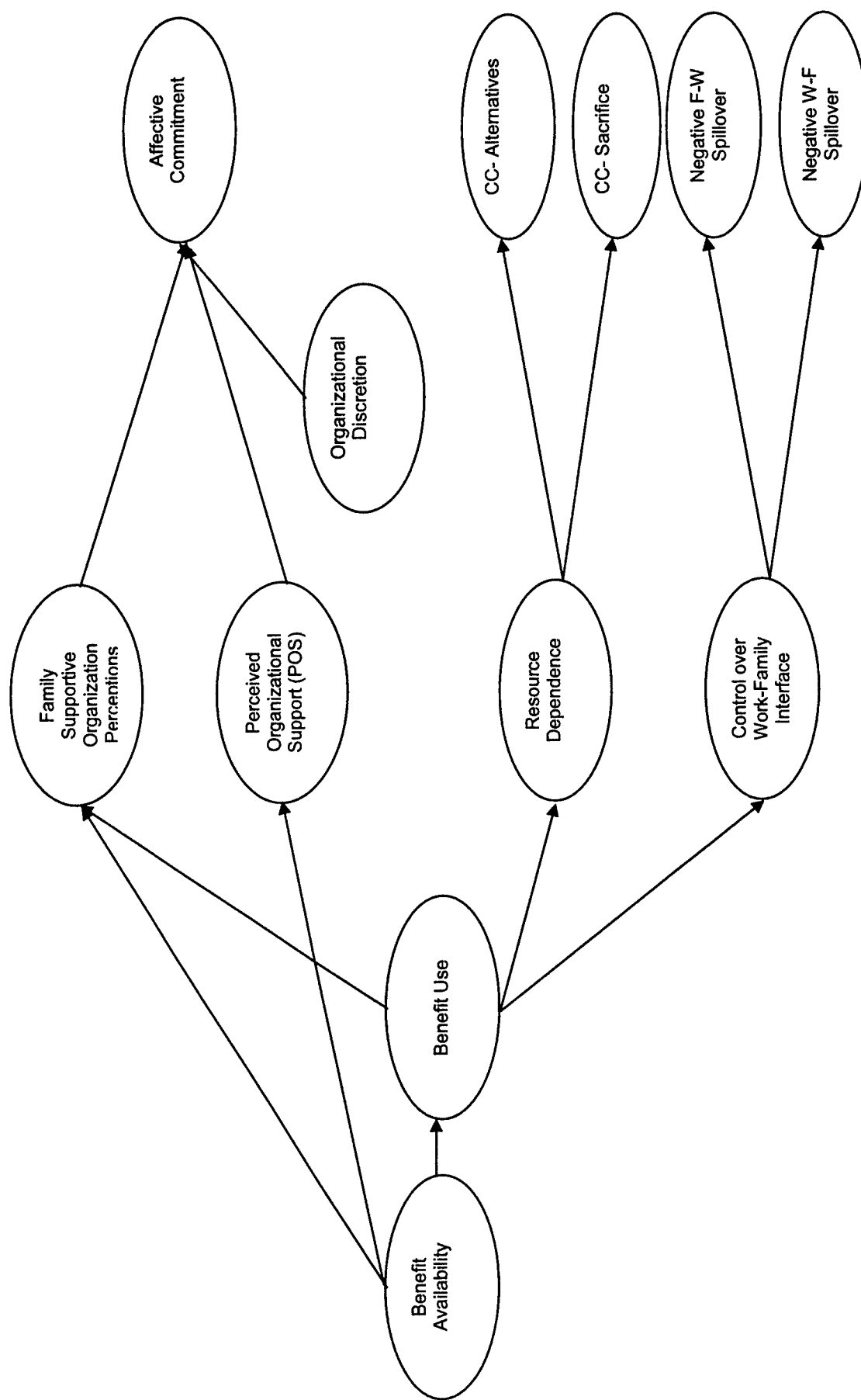
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Figure 1. Hypothesized model linking organizational benefits and organizational commitment. CC = continuance commitment, F-W = family to work, W-F = work to family.

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Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. In other words, stress in one realm "spills over" into another realm. Work-family conflict (or "negative spillover") can be described in terms of time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Research also indicates that work-family conflict occurs bi-directionally, with family interfering with work and work interfering with family (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). In addition, Frone et al. (1992) reported that work and family boundaries are asymmetrically permeable with work interference with family occurring more often than family interference with work.

The Role of Social Support

The stress-buffering hypothesis states that the stressor-strain relationship is weaker for those with strong social ties to other people or groups (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000; Cohen & Wills, 1985). This moderated relationship is supported by meta-analytic research; however, there is also evidence that support directly influences stress (Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Organizational support research simply applies the stress-buffering principle to the employment relationship. Perceived organizational support (POS) is regarded as an assurance that aid will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out one's job effectively and to deal with stressful situations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Social Support

Social support theories distinguish between functions that are available if needed (perceived) or that are actually provided (received; Wills & Shinar, 2000). Perceived support is also called "available support" and refers to support that one believes will be available when stressful situations arise. The perception that others will provide resources when they are needed is the key to the stress-buffering principle (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000). Having received support in the past will also contribute to beliefs concerning the future availability of aid.

Organizations can offer social support through a family-supportive climate, formal practices, supervisors, and coworkers. Family-supportive organization perceptions (FSOP) refer to organizational members' perceptions about the extent to which the organization tries to accommodate the diverse needs of the workforce. Such needs relate to balancing the demands of work and nonwork life. There is clearly a niche for organizations to facilitate individuals' functioning while coincidentally furthering organizational interests. Studies of family-supportive organizational climate indicate that supportiveness influences the efficacy of benefits intended to reduce work-family spillover and improve work attitudes (Allen, 2001; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). These findings are consistent with the importance of consistency among an organization's espoused values, policies, and actions.

Organizational Support Theory (OST)

Organizational support theory posits employees form global beliefs about the extent to which the work organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being

(Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organizational support is influenced by organizational rewards and job conditions, fairness of treatment, and supervisor support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Perceived organizational support reflects the organization's general concern for organizational members, whereas FSOP refers specifically to the organization's supportiveness regarding work and family issues.

Research on work-life policy suggests that knowledge that a policy exists, whether one currently uses that policy or not, is sufficient to influence employee perceptions and attitudes (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Thus, it is likely that family-supportive benefits will contribute positively to perceived organizational support. The following hypotheses were proposed:

> H1: Benefit availability and benefit use are positively related.
> H2: Both benefit availability and benefit use are positively related to support variables, perceived organizational support (POS) and family-supportive organization perceptions (FSOP).

Meta-analytic evidence has shown that perceived organizational support is positively related to affective commitment (AC), job satisfaction and positive mood, job involvement, and performance (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001) and negatively related to absenteeism (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) noted that consistent with social exchange (Blau, 1964), employees trade effort and loyalty to the organization for tangible benefits and social rewards. The observed relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment indicates that this is true. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H3: Support variables, POS and FSOP, are positively related to affective commitment.

In addition, resources that are granted at the discretion of the organization are valued more than those beyond the control of the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This poses an interesting problem for organizations offering work-life supports. If benefits are perceived by employees or applicants as an entitlement or as being outside organizational control, social exchange theory predicts that they will be valued less. Thus, the desired POS-AC relationship would be weakened. If the benefits are perceived by employees or applicants as a signal of that organization's commitment to employee well-being, social exchange theory predicts that they will be valued more. Thus, the positive POS-AC relationship would be strengthened. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> H4: Organizational discretion moderates the positive support-AC relations such that the relations increase in magnitude when organizational discretion increases.

In general, provision of benefits contributes to interpretations that the organization values and care about individual employees. The organizational support framework indicates that support, in the form of organizational benefits, increases affective commitment to the organization and other favorable job attitudes.

Social support decreases aversive outcomes in a variety of settings. Social support theory suggests that work-life benefits signal supportive intentions, decrease work-family conflict, and foster emotional attachment to the organization. Thus, functioning in work and nonwork roles should be improved by work-life benefits.

The Role of Resource Dependence: A Loss of Personal Control

It is understood that individuals function most effectively and happily when they guide their own behavior (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996). However, the goal of most psychological interventions is to change the behavior of others (Huffman, Vernoy, & Vernoy, 1997). So, it is important to understand the conditions under which organizations may influence employee behavior but avoid the potential detrimental effects of assuming some degree of control. As Blau (1964) noted, social exchange has twofold implications. It creates bonds of goodwill and trust but also produces and underscores power differences between superiors and inferiors. Applied to exchange in the employment relationship, this suggests that benefits may result in both positive affect and resource dependence.

Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) indicates that dependence on others for needed resources is part of organizational life. Organizations, like individual employees, do not operate independently of the external environment. This dependence is helpful as it means an organization (or individual) is able to secure needed resources. It can be unfavorable when the needed resources are scarce, meaning that they are difficult to obtain from other providers. Dependence on one or few providers for a resource reduces one's decision latitude; there are fewer alternative sources and therefore fewer choices.

Several researchers, using contextualized measures of control, have examined control of the work situation, control over work schedules, and control over areas of work and family (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981; Tausig & Fenwick, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Results indicate that control of the work-life interface is related to lower levels of work-family conflict, job dissatisfaction, depression, and physical health complaints (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). However, benefit use may also negatively influence attitudes. Individuals' dependence on benefits may evolve over time as they become accustomed to particular benefits. This dependence is increased when similar benefits are not available from other sources and may result in a perceived loss associated with leaving the organization. An individual may feel that there is no option but to stay in the current job because of those costs. Given the potential for negative consequences, it is important to examine the various ways work-life policies affect attitudes and behavior.

The Benefits of Personal Control

Work-related control is negatively related to distress (Hofmann & Tetrick, 2003). Both a loss of control and the long-term experience of low control have been related to decreased well-being (Theorell, 2002). Although many studies are correlational, experimental studies have also shown that employees granted greater decision latitude and social support experience less strain,

job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and intentions to leave the job (Jackson, 1983). As always, the interests of the individual and the organization should be balanced (Bennett, Cook, & Pelletier, 2003). Control must be allocated to individuals in a manner that facilitates both organizational behavior and the management of work-life conflict. The following hypotheses regarding family-supportive benefits, control, and commitment are proposed:

H5: Benefit use is positively related to control variables, resource dependence and control over work-family interface.
H6: Resource dependence is positively related to continuance commitment.
H7: Control of work-family interface is negatively related to negative work-family spillover.

Summary: A Resource Dependence Approach to Organizational Benefits

The importance of personal control suggests that use of work-life policies should increase decision latitude regarding work and family life. It is important, however, to recognize that dependence on work-life benefits could decrease the overall positive impact on job attitudes. An increase in continuance commitment, which is negatively related to work attitudes and behavior, would negatively impact the employment relationship (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Perceptions that benefits are not discretionary could also decrease employees' positive reactions. If these processes occur, the net positive influence of benefits on work attitudes and behavior may be lessened.

Summary of Research Purpose

This research applied a correlational approach to studying outcomes associated with work-life benefits. Specifically, we assessed the impact of work-life benefits on employee well-being and work attitudes. Although this research did not involve manipulation of the independent variables, the strength of the approach is in the evaluation of working adults with regard to their current work organization.

This research tested hypotheses regarding the impact of nonfinancial organizational resources on different stages of the employee-organization relationship. Given the desirability of retaining high-quality individuals without increasing wages and the increasing variability of individuals' personal life demands, organizations are motivated to understand the consequences of offering work-life benefits. Despite the popular appeal of "family-supportive" benefits and pressure to adopt such policies, it is imperative that organizations approach policy decisions on the basis of sound research findings.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were U.S. Army captains ($N = 254$) in engineer, military police, chemical, and ordnance jobs. Most were young ($M_{age} = 30.0$ years, SD = 4.0), male (77%), and Caucasian (62%). Although it is desirable to have representative proportions of male and female

participants in studying work and family, research evidence suggests that work-nonwork interactions function similarly for men and women (e.g., Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997). Most of the participants were married (61%), and many provided care for at least one dependent child or adult (47%). Most of the sample (66%) had some type of family-related obligation, defined as having a parent, spouse, or both.

Measures

Participants completed a questionnaire and reported demographic information, including sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, parental status, and years served in the Army. Scale items are presented in Appendix A. All items and scales were coded such that high values correspond to high levels of the construct. Constructs reflected in the hypothesized model are described below.

Benefit Availability

Respondents were asked, "To your knowledge, which of the following resources is made available by the Army for you to use?" The list of resources included job-related training, relocation assistance, health insurance, retirement savings plan, paid leave, unpaid leave, sick leave, parental leave, educational support, dependent care supports, flexible work arrangements, and family stress programs. Response options were Yes, No, and Don't know. Similar checklists have been used by Allen (2001) and Thompson et al. (1999). Availability scores were computed by summing the number of affirmative responses. Thus, possible values for benefit availability ranged from zero to 14.

Organizational Discretion

Respondents were asked, "To what extent does the Army choose to offer these resources because it is committed to Soldier well-being?" The list of resources were taken from the resource availability list (above). Response options ranged from 1 (*Very low commitment to Soldiers*) to 7 (*Very high commitment to Soldiers*). Scale scores were computed as means of the 14 items. The coefficient alpha estimate for this scale was .91.

Benefit Use

Respondents were asked to indicate which resources they currently use. Response options were Yes, No, and Don't know. Usage scores were computed by summing the number of affirmative responses. Thus, possible values for total benefit use ranged from zero to 14.

Resource Dependence

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), the three dimensions of resource dependence are the importance of the resource, extent that the provider has control over the resource, and lack of alternatives to the resources. Because resource dependence measures vary greatly and the construct has in the past been measured at the organizational level, six items reflecting the three components of resource dependence were written for this study (Appendix A). The items assess how much the individual values the resource, the degree to which the organization has power over whether they offer the resource or not, and the availability of the resource from other

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organizations. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha estimate for this scale was .91.

Control over Work-Family Iinterface.

Seven items from the scale developed by Thomas and Ganster (1995) were used to measure perceptions of control over areas of work and family that have been shown to contribute to work-family conflict. Items referred to the extent to which respondents have control over a variety of areas at work and at home, such as work scheduled and time off to attend to a sick family member. Response options range from 1 (*very little*) to 7 (*very much*). The coefficient alpha estimate for this study was .72.

Perceived Organizational Support

A 6-item version of the perceived organizational support scale was used (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Respondents indicated their level of agreement with 6 statements describing the extent to which the organization cares about and values the employee. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha estimate for the 7 items used in this study was .85.

Family-Supportive Organization Perceptions

The 14-item scale created by Allen (2001) was used to assess family supportive organization perceptions. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with 14 statements describing the extent to which the philosophy and beliefs of the organization are supportive of family or personal life. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses were coded such that high values correspond to high levels of FSOP. The coefficient alpha estimate for this scale was .70.

Negative Work-Family Spillover

Two scales created by Gryzwacz and Marks (2000) were used to assess negative work-to-family spillover (four items) and negative family-to-work spillover (4 items). Respondents indicated the frequency with which they experienced the conditions described by each statement. Response options ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all of the time*). The coefficient alpha estimates for these scales were .82 (negative family-to-work spillover) and .86 (negative work-to-family spillover).

Affective Commitment

An eight-item version of the affective organizational commitment scale was used in this study (Gade, Tiggle, & Schumm, 2003; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements describing their emotional attachment to the organization. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses were coded such that high values correspond to high levels of affective commitment. The coefficient alpha estimate for this scale was .80.

An six items from the continuance organizational commitment scale was used in this study (Gade, Tiggle, & Schumm, 2003; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements describing the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

McGee and Ford (1987) noted that the construct consists of two distinct dimensions, lack of alternatives (3 items) and personal sacrifice (3 items). Thus, separate scores were computed for each of the dimensions. The coefficient alpha estimates were .74 (lack of alternatives) and .73 (personal sacrifice).

Analyses

Hypotheses 1 through 6 were tested by estimating nested moderated structural equation models. First, the hypothesized measurement model was tested. Then, nested models were compared via chi-square difference tests. A significant decrease in chi-square suggests that the model with the lower value is a better fit to the data. Degrees of freedom for this test are computed as the absolute difference between the respective model chi-square values.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations (Table 1) were computed for all measured variables. The hypotheses were tested using moderated structural equation modeling (MSEM). The measurement model was first tested. Overall fit statistics and individual parameters were evaluated for the hypothesized measurement structure (Table 2). Additional analyses assessed the hypothesized measurement model in terms of its differentiation of several constructs. More specifically, chi-square tests indicated that the hypothesized measurement structure was superior ($X^2(1394, N = 254) = 3931.9, p < .05$, RMSEA $= .09$) to a structural model that combined the two continuance commitment dimensions into a single latent factor ($\Delta X^2(8, N = 254) = 168.6, p < .001$), to a model that treated affective and continuance commitment as a combined construct ($\Delta X^2(15, N = 254) = 1007.0, p < .001$), and to a model in which the directional conceptualizations of spillover (work-family and family-work) were combined ($\Delta X^2(8, N = 254) = 435.7, p < .001$; Table 2). Thus, these comparisons supported the hypothesized differentiation of commitment and spillover.

Second, the moderated structural equation modeling procedure described by Mathieu et al. (1992) and Cortina et al. (2001) was used to test the hypotheses. Following the Mathieu et al. (1992), summed and standardized scale scores were computed for each variable. Two-way interaction terms (for the discretion by FSOP interaction and for the discretion by POS interaction) were created by multiplying two scale scores together. For each main effect variable, lambda-X (or lambda-Y) values were fixed at the square root of alpha (internal consistency reliability). Theta-delta (or theta-epsilon) values were fixed at the variance multiplied by the remainder of 1 minus the square root of alpha. For each product term, lambda-X (or lambda-Y)

values were fixed as prescribed by equation 14 of Cortina et al. (2001). Theta-delta (or theta-epsilon) values were fixed at the variance multiplied by the remainder of 1 minus the square root of computed reliability of the product term. For measures without reliability estimates, such as benefit availability, lambda-X (or lambda-Y) values were fixed at unity and theta-delta (or theta-epsilon) values were fixed at zero. Thus, each MSEM was a fully manifest model with a single indicator per latent construct.

The model was first tested with additive effects but no interactions, $X^2(73, N = 254) = 491.3, p < .05$, RMSEA = .15. This model provided a marginal fit to the data as the comparative fit index (CFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) were well below the accepted range of values indicating good fit (.90 - 1.0; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Table 3). The root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) was well above the accepted range of values indicating good fit (.0 - .10; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

The two hypothesized moderated relations were tested by adding one interaction term to the model at a time and conducting chi-square difference tests. Significant decreases in chi-square with the addition of an interaction indicate that the interaction improves the model. In the case of a nonsignificant change in chi-square, the more parsimonious model is preferred.

Addition of the interaction between FSOP and organizational discretion resulted in a nonsignificant change in chi-square, $\Delta X^2(1, N = 254) = 0.8$, ns. Therefore, the more parsimonious additive model was superior to the interactive model including the FSOP-organizational discretion product. Addition of the interaction between POS and organizational discretion also resulted in a nonsignificant change in chi-square, $\Delta X^2(1, N = 254) = 0.0$, ns. Therefore, the additive model was superior to either of the moderated models.

Examination of the final model (with no interactions) indicates that some predictions were supported by the data. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, benefit availability and benefit use were positively and significantly related (Figure 2). However, the strength of association was somewhat weak (.23, $p < .05$). Benefit availability and use were generally unrelated to the support variables, family-supportive organization perceptions and perceived organizational support. The only exception was the association between benefit availability and perceived organizational support (.20, $p < .05$). Therefore, the data provided only weak support for the prediction that these relations are positive and significant (Hypothesis 2).

Hypothesis 3, that the support variables are positively and significantly related to affective commitment to the organization, was supported by these results. POS (.50, $p < .05$) and family-supportive organization perceptions (.13, $p < .05$) were positively related to affective commitment.

Hypothesis 4, that increased organizational discretion is associated with stronger support-AC relations, was not supported. The interactions of discretion with FSOP and POS in the prediction of affective commitment were nonsignificant (Table 3). Therefore, these relations were depicted as additive rather than multiplicative in the final model (Figure 2).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Age (in years)	29.98	3.98	—														
2 Sex (0=male, 1=female)	0.23	0.42	-0.16	—													
3 Marital status (0=unmarried, 1=married)	0.61	0.49	0.29	-0.25	—												
4 Dependents (0=no, 1=yes)	0.37	0.48	0.36	-0.17	0.41	—											
5 Benefit availability	10.50	2.95	0.08	0.01	-0.01	0.08	—										
6 Benefits used	4.93	2.38	0.28	-0.01	0.21	0.25	0.19	—									
7 Perceived organizational support	3.99	1.20	0.14	-0.06	-0.02	0.01	0.24	0.14	(.85)								
8 Family-supportive organization perceptions	4.47	0.75	-0.05	-0.02	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.07	0.14	(.70)							
9 Affective commitment	4.53	1.15	0.08	-0.13	0.09	0.07	0.22	0.06	0.50	0.20	(.80)						
10 Continuance commitment, lack of alternatives	3.39	1.46	0.09	-0.01	0.06	0.16	-0.01	0.17	-0.07	0.03	-0.15	(.74)					
11 Continuance commitment, personal sacrifice	3.78	1.57	0.16	0.00	0.14	0.23	0.08	0.20	0.17	0.08	0.09	0.67	(.73)				
12 Organizational discretion	4.49	1.04	0.07	-0.02	0.00	0.00	0.41	0.12	0.45	0.16	0.31	-0.14	-0.01	(.91)			
13 Resource dependence	4.61	1.16	0.11	-0.03	0.12	0.11	0.31	0.20	0.32	0.06	0.23	-0.06	0.10	0.45	(.91)		
14 Control over work-family interface	2.76	1.06	0.14	0.00	-0.07	-0.01	0.23	0.14	0.42	0.03	0.23	0.01	0.13	0.38	0.24	(.72)	
15 Family-to-work conflict	3.73	1.27	0.01	-0.11	-0.01	0.05	-0.13	0.02	-0.06	-0.08	-0.07	0.27	0.18	-0.13	-0.13	0.00	(.82)
16 Work-to-family conflict	4.78	1.12	-0.11	0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.12	-0.12	-0.36	-0.17	-0.16	0.12	0.08	-0.23	-0.11	-0.28	0.37

Notes. Correlations greater than .12 are statistically significant, $p < .05$. Sample sizes range from 247 to 252.

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Hypothesis 5, that benefit use is positively related to control variables, was fully supported by the data. Benefit use was a significant predictor of both resource dependence (.23, $p < .05$) and control over the work-family interface (.19, $p < .05$).

Table 2.
Confirmatory Factor Analytic Model Testing

Model	Chi-square	df	Chi-square change	df change	CFI	RMSEA
1 Model with 9 latent variables	3931.9	1394	---	---	0.77	0.09
2 Model 1 with CC dimensions combined	4100.5	1402	168.6***	8	0.76	0.09
3 Model 1 with AC and CC combined	4938.9	1409	1007.0***	15	0.72	0.10
4 Model 1 with WF and FW spillover combined	4367.6	1402	435.7***	8	0.75	0.10

Notes. Chi-square difference tests were conducted relative to Model 1. CFI = comparative fit index, NFI = normed fit index, RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation, CC = continuance commitment, AC = affective commitment, WF = work to family, FIW = family to work. ***$p < .001$

Table 3.
Moderated Structural Equation Model Testing

Model	Chi-square	df	Chi-square change	df change	CFI	AGFI	GFI	RMSEA
1 Model with additive effects, no interactions	491.3	73	---	---	0.46	0.68	0.78	0.15
2 Model with FSOP interaction included	490.5	72	.8, ns	1	0.46	0.68	0.78	0.15
3 Model with POS interaction included	491.3	72	0, ns	1	0.46	0.68	0.78	0.15

Notes. Chi-square difference tests were conducted relative to Model 1. CFI = comparative fit index, AGFI= adjusted goodness-of-fit index, GFI = goodness-of-fit index, RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation, FSOP = family-supportive organization perceptions, POS = perceived organizational support.

Hypothesis 6, that resource dependence is positively related to continuance commitment, was not supported. Resource dependence was significantly related to neither the lack of alternatives dimension of CC (-.07, *ns*) nor the personal sacrifice dimension (.12, *ns*).

Hypothesis 7, that control over the work-family interface is negatively related to both dimensions of negative work-family spillover was partially supported. Although control over the work-family interface was significantly related to negative work-to-family spillover in the hypothesized direction (-.30, $p < .05$), it was unrelated to negative family-to-work spillover (-.04, *ns*).

Overall, results indicated benefits were associated with increased perceived organizational support and affective commitment to the organization. They also suggested that benefit use was associated with increased control over the work-family interface, which was related to less work-to-family spillover. Finally, although benefit use was positively related to resource dependence, resource dependence did not increase either dimension of continuance commitment.
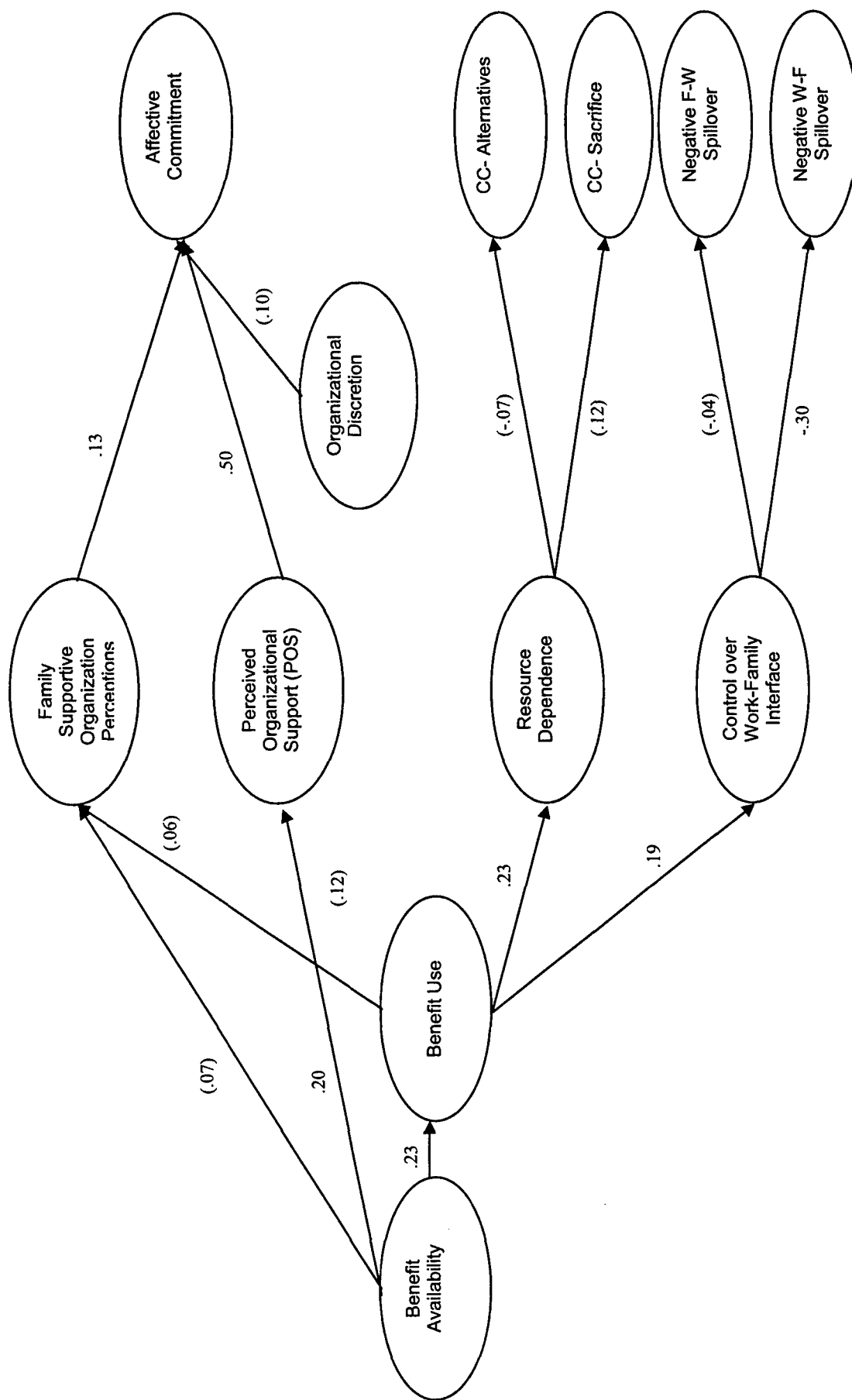
Figure 2. Results for final structural equation model linking organizational benefits and organizational commitment. Parameter estimates in parentheses are nonsignificant at the .05 level. Nonsignificant interactions (based on previous analyses) were omitted from this model. CC = continuance commitment, F-W = family to work, W-F = work to family.

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DISCUSSION

Findings

This research examined the retention of junior Army officers as it relates to benefit use, social support perceptions, and control over work-family issues. Hypotheses were based on principles of social support and need for personal control. Results provided partial support for the process by which benefits are construed as support, which increases affective commitment, and the process by which benefits increase personal control, which decreases negative work-family spillover. Interestingly, benefit use was positively related to increased control over the work-family interface *and* increased resource dependence, which is characterized by dependence on others for their support and may be construed as surrendering some degree of control. Resource dependence did not increase continuance commitment, but it might become a problem if an organization were somehow unable to continue providing a benefit on which workers depend. In addition, results indicated that perceived organizational support is positively related to affective commitment, regardless of the extent of discretion attributed to the act of giving support. Future research could extend these findings by exploring other conceptualizations of Army support, as well as other means to increase control over work-family issues.

Results did not support the expected relations between benefit variables and family-supportive organization perceptions. Although FSOP was variable, normally distributed, and internally consistent, it was unrelated to benefit availability and benefit use. This is inconsistent with much prior research on employer family-supportiveness (e.g., Allen, 2001; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). However, Behson (2002) reported similar findings and suggested that work-family specific context variables may not relate to general work attitudes when studied alongside general context variables such as perceived organizational support. The lack of associations among FSOP and the benefit variables may be partially attributable to a) low variability and non-normality in the benefits measures and b) the broad scope of work-life benefits items (which include educational support and dependent care supports) versus the specificity of family-supportiveness items, which focus on family-related issues. It is also interesting that availability of benefits contributed to perceptions of organizational support, but whether one used the benefits or not was unrelated to POS. This suggests that awareness of benefits fosters the sense that the organization cares about its employees.

It is interesting to note that although benefit use was uncorrelated with affective commitment, it was significantly and positively correlated with both dimensions of continuance commitment (Table 3). That is, benefit use did not appear to increase affective commitment via its influence on perceived organizational support, but it was associated with higher continuance commitment. This suggests that use of work-life benefits is related to an individual's sense of being "trapped," in that leaving one's job would involve sacrificing those benefits and having to locate a satisfactory alternative. Future research should address the potential for benefit use to result in negative work attitudes, as perceptions of being trapped or frustrated can serve as "triggers" that promote general counterproductive behavior as a response (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Conversely, usefulness attributed to work-family policies has been positively related to extrarole behavior (Lambert, 2000).

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Although the literature on outcomes of work-life benefits is mixed, the findings of this research link benefits to both increased commitment to the organization and decreased work-family conflict. Additional research is needed to specify the conditions under which benefits indeed lead to favorable work attitudes and balance between work and personal life.

Limitations and Future Research

The omnipresent challenge of single source data in questionnaire research could be addressed in this line of research by including benefit availability, social support, and organizational discretion measures that are aggregated at the work unit level, where appropriate, and including more objective behavioral outcomes such as organizational withdrawal and some stress measures. Examination of a combination of attitudinal and behavioral outcomes would support the actuality of benefit-outcome relations as well as the importance of subjective experience in determining outcomes of work-life benefits. Additionally, a sample with a greater balance of male and female participants would be ideal.

Conclusions

These findings link benefits to increased commitment to the Army and decreased work-family conflict. That is, by increasing personal control and perceptions of organizational support, benefits may be an efficacious way to address organizations' missions to improve worker commitment and well-being. An unexpected finding was that although benefit availability was related to POS, it was not related to family-supportive organization perceptions as found in previous research (Allen, 2001). The findings regarding benefits, commitment, and negative work-family spillover imply that benefits are weakly associated with increased POS, which is strongly associated with increased affective commitment. The strong POS-AC relation does not appear to be conditional upon the extent to which individuals perceive that the benefits were offered at the discretion of the organization and not because of external pressure, mandates, or other requirements. This finding is inconsistent with organizational support theory and previous research findings that suggest that discretionary resources are valued more (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2004). Our results also imply that benefits are associated with increased control over the work-family interface and decreased negative work-to-family spillover. Because these processes are dependent on weak benefit-outcome relations, it is important to continue exploring conditions that can increase the efficacy of benefits to improve individuals' work attitudes and well-being. Organizations already offering work-life benefits should maximize the investments in such benefits by understanding environmental conditions and supervisor behaviors that maximize their efficacy.

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APPENDIX A: STEMS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Stems for benefit items

- relocation assistance
- health care, including medical and dental coverage
- retirement benefits
- survivor benefits
- annual leave
- maternal leave
- paternal leave
- educational support for self
- educational support for spouse or dependents
- life insurance
- dependent care services
- flexible work arrangements, including flexible scheduling and telework
- family stress programs, family counseling, and family support groups
- other family-supportive benefits

Resource dependence

- The family-supportive benefits provided by the Army are important to me.
- The family-supportive benefits provided by the Army have a valuable impact on my life.
- The Army is able to exercise control over what family-friendly benefits are offered to Soldiers.
- It is easy for the Army to offer family-supportive benefits if it wants to.
- The family-supportive benefits provided by the Army would be difficult to obtain from other sources.
- The family-related benefits provided by the Army are better than benefits that other organizations offer.

Control over work family interface (adapted from Thomas & Ganster, 1995)

- How much choice do you have in arranging part-time employment?
- To what extent can you choose to do some of your work at home instead of your usual place of work?
- How much choice do you have over the amount and timing of work you must do at home in order to meet your job demands?
- How much choice do you have over when you take vacations or days off?
- How much control do you have over when you can take a few hours off?
- How much choice do you have over when you begin and end each workday or each workweek?
- To what extent are you expected to limit the number of times you make or receive personal phone calls while you work?

Perceived organizational support (adapted from Eisenberger et al., 2001)

- The Army takes pride in my accomplishments.
- The Army really cares about my well-being.
- The Army values my contributions to its well-being.
- The Army strongly considers my goals and values.
- The Army shows little concern for me.
- The Army is willing to help me if I need a special favor.

Family-supportive organization perceptions (adapted from Allen, 2001)

- Work should be the primary priority in a person's life.
- Long hours at work are the way to achieving advancement.
- It is best to keep family matters separate from work.
- It is not acceptable to talk about life outside of work.
- Expressing involvement and interest in nonwork matters is viewed as healthy.
- Individuals who are highly committed to their personal lives cannot be committed to their work.
- Attending to personal needs, such as taking time off for sick children is frowned upon.
- Workers should keep personal problems at home.
- The way to advance in the Army is to keep nonwork matters out of the workplace.
- Individuals who take time off to attend to personal matters are not committed to their work.
- It is assumed that the most productive workers are those who put their work before their family life.
- Workers are given ample time to perform both their jobs and their personal responsibilities well.
- Offering workers flexibility in completing their work is viewed as a strategic way of doing business.
- The ideal worker is one who is available 24 hours a day.

Affective organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984)

- I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the Army.
- I do not feel "emotionally attached" to the Army.
- The Army has a great deal of personal meaning to me.
- I do not feel like "part of the family" in the Army.
- I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in the Army.
- I enjoy discussing the Army with people outside it.
- I really feel as if the Army's problems are my own.
- I think I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to the Army.

Continuance organizational commitment- lack of alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 1984)

- Right now, staying with the Army is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
- I feel I have too few options to consider leaving the Army.
- One of the few negative consequences of leaving the Army would be the scarcity of available alternatives.

Continuance organizational commitment- perceived sacrifice (Meyer & Allen, 1984)

- One of the major reasons I stay in the Army is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice- another organization may not match the overall benefits I have.
- It would be very hard for me to leave the Army right now, even if I wanted to.
- Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave the Army now.

Negative family-to-work spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000)

- Responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job.
- Personal or family worries and problems distract you when you are at work.
- Activities and chores at home prevent you from getting the amount of sleep you need to do your job well.
- Stress at home makes you irritable at work.

Negative work-to-family spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000)

- Your job reduces the effort you can give to activities at home.
- Stress at work makes you irritable at home.
- Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home.
- Job worries or problems distract you when you are at home.